



*** Tips For *** **Nursing Mothers** **Concerns About Nursing Beyond** **The First Few Weeks**



After the first few weeks--and often sooner--you and your baby will settle into the routine of breastfeeding. Many mothers find that they look forward to relaxing nursing sessions with their babies. Occasionally, even a mother who has been nursing for some time will have questions.

Leaking

Leaking usually stops in the first six weeks. Still, a mother may feel fullness or find herself leaking if she is away from her baby for longer than usual. Being near other babies can sometimes cause leaking as well. Direct pressure on the nipple will stop the leaking.

Growth Spurts

Don't worry if at times your baby seems to eat and eat. One of a baby's tasks is to gain weight. Frequent nursing helps to build your milk supply to meet his needs. If he is going through a growth spurt, it may seem as though he is eating all the time. Typical times for growth spurts are at 2 weeks, 6 weeks, 3 months and 5 to 6 months. Remember, your baby is the best judge of when he needs to eat and for how long--let him guide you.

Plugged Duct

Tenderness or a small bead in the breast could be a plugged duct. Changing your baby's nursing schedule or position and wearing tight clothes, bra, baby sling or shoulder bag are common causes of a plugged duct.

To help unclog the plug:

- Continue to BREASTFEED. Try different positions where the top of your baby's nose points toward the plugged duct.
- Gently massage the plug before and during a feeding. A warm compress on the plug may also help. It's okay if the baby swallows the plug.

If the plugged duct doesn't go away within a couple of days, visit a lactation consultant or doctor. Untreated plugged ducts can lead to mastitis. Also, see a doctor if the same duct keeps getting plugged.

Mastitis

Mastitis is a breast infection caused when milk is not readily removed from the breast and is invaded by bacteria. Common causes of mastitis are having an untreated cracked nipple, plugged duct, or engorgement. Changing the nursing schedule because mom is overly busy, stressed or exhausted can also cause mastitis. Mastitis often feels like having the flu. The breast may be tender and warm to the touch and have reddish streaks. It's important to have mastitis treated right away to avoid continuing problems.

- Continue to BREASTFEED. Your milk is still safe and healthy for your baby.
- Visit your doctor. Take all the antibiotics even if you begin to feel better.
- Try to get plenty of sleep and rest. Eat well and drink lots of fluids.

- Use warm compresses and/or cold packs on the infected area.

Teething, Biting

Babies get their first teeth at different times during the first year. But the process of teething often begins several weeks or even months before the first teeth appear. Babies may have sore gums, increased drooling and periods of fussiness. Many babies like the feeling of something cold and firm on their gums as they teethe. Teething toys that have been chilled in the refrigerator or freezer are good, as are clean washcloths that have been soaked and frozen, or try a frozen bagel. Massaging the gums with a clean finger may also help some babies. Teething babies sometimes fuss about nursing. You may find that changing positions helps.

Just because a baby gets teeth doesn't mean a mom will be bitten during breastfeeding. However, at times, especially as a nursing session ends and baby is coming off the breast, biting may occur. Try not to respond with a loud scream. Instead, begin to watch the baby as he finishes nursing for cues that he might bite. For example, if the baby begins to look playful, watch out. If the baby does bite, or experiments with his new teeth, say, "No!" and take the baby off the breast. Remind the baby to be gentle. Often problems with biting are short-lived and mothers nurse babies that have one tooth or many without problems. If a bite ever breaks the skin, be sure to keep the area clean.

Once a baby begins to get teeth, start cleaning them once or twice a day with a clean wash cloth or a piece of gauze. Also, check teeth monthly for bright white spots which can be signs of early decay. Check with your dentist on when to bring baby in for his first dental checkup.

Yeast Infections - Breast, Vaginal, Thrush

One cause of nipple soreness that can occur at anytime is a yeast infection. The nipples can appear pink or red and be cracked, peeling or rash-like. The nipples may burn and there may be pain felt inside the breast. Yeast can occur when heat and moisture are trapped near the nipples. Air drying after nursing sessions can often prevent yeast. A baby can catch yeast from his mother. In the baby's mouth, yeast is called thrush and may appear as white patches. A diaper rash also can be a sign of a yeast infection. A yeast diaper rash is usually on the genitals and may look like a burn, sometimes with peeling. If either mother or baby has a yeast infection, both should be treated at the same time.

A doctor should assess the situation and prescribe medications for both mother and baby—usually ointment for the mother and liquid medication for the baby. Often the mother can be treated with an over-the-counter yeast cream, which can also be used on the baby's bottom if there are signs of yeast in the diaper area.

Wash in hot water your bras, breast pads, nightgowns and other clothing that have come in contact with the breast. Boil bottle nipples, pacifiers, and baby toys for five minutes or replace to avoid reinfection.

If you have questions about breastfeeding, contact your local:

WIC Breastfeeding Counselor:

La Leche League Leader:

Lactation Consultant:
